THE WORLD.

NUMBER CIV.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *December* the 26th, 1754.

Scria cum poſſim quod delectantia malim
Scribere, tu cauſa es, Lector.——

MART.

THIS being the day after the feſtival of Chriſtmas, as alſo the laſt Thurſday of the old year, I feel myſelf in a manner called upon for a paper ſuitable to the ſolemnity of the occaſion. But upon reflection I find it neceſſary to reject any ſuch conſideration, for the ſame reaſon that I have hitherto declined giving too ſerious a turn to the generality of theſe eſſays. Papers of pleaſantry, enforcing ſome leſſer duty, or reprehending ſome faſhionable folly, will be of more real uſe than

than the fineſt writing and moſt virtuous moral, which few or none will be at the pains to read through. I do not mean to reproach the age with having no delight in any thing ſerious; but I cannot help obſerving, that the demand for moral eſſays (and the preſent times have produced many very excellent ones) has of late fallen very ſhort of their acknowledged merits.

THE world has always conſidered amuſement to be the principal end of a public paper: and though it is the duty of a writer to take care that ſome uſeful moral be inculcated, yet unleſs he be happy in the peculiar talent of couching it under the appearance of mere entertainment, his compoſitions will be uſeleſs: his readers will ſleep over his unenlivened inſtruction, or be diſguſted at his too frequently overhawling old worn-out ſubjects, and retailing what is to be found in every library in the kingdom.

INNOCENT mirth and levity are more apparently the province of ſuch an undertaking as this: but whether they are really ſo or not, while mankind agree to think ſo, the writer who ſhall happen to be of a different opinion, muſt ſoon find himſelf obliged either to lay aſide his prejudices or his pen. Pleaſantry and wit have at all times been the greateſt ſupport of occaſional writings: nor ought it to be ſuppoſed in our days, when every general topic is exhauſted, that there can be any other way of engaging the attention, than by repreſenting the manners as faſt as they change, and enforcing the novelty of them with all the powers of drawing, and heightening it with all the colouring of humour. The only danger is, leſt the habit of levity ſhould tend to the admiſſion of any thing contrary to the deſign of ſuch a work. To this I can only ſay, that

that the greateſt care has been taken in the courſe of theſe papers to weigh and conſider the tendency of every ſentiment and expreſſion; and if any thing improper has obtained a place in them, I can truly aſſert that it has been only owing to that inadvertency which attends a various publication; and which is ſo inevitable, that (however extraordinary it may ſeem to thoſe who are now to be told it) it is notorious that there are papers printed in the Guardians, which were written in artful ridicule of the very undertakers of that work, and their moſt particular friends.

In writings of humour, figures are ſometimes uſed of ſo delicate a nature, that it ſhall often happen that ſome people will ſee things in a direct contrary ſenſe to what the author and the majority of readers underſtand them. To ſuch, the moſt innocent irony may appear irreligion or wickedneſs. But in the miſapprehenſion of this figure, it is not always that the reader is to blame. A great deal of irony may ſeem very clear to the writer, which may not be ſo properly managed as to be ſafely truſted to the various capacities and apprehenſions of all ſorts of readers. In ſuch caſes the conductor of a paper will be liable to various kinds of cenſure, though in reality nothing can be proved againſt him but want of judgment.

Having given my general reaſons againſt the too frequent writing of ſerious papers, it may not be improper to ſpeak more particularly of the ſeaſon which gave riſe to theſe reflections, and to ſhew that as matters ſtand at preſent, it would not even be a ſanction for ſuch kind of compoſitions. Our anceſtors conſidered Chriſtmas in the double light of a holy commemoration, and a chearful feſtival; and accordingly diſtinguiſhed it by devotion,

by

by vacation from buſineſs, by merriment and hoſpitality. They ſeemed eagerly bent to make themſelves and everybody about them happy. With what punctual zeal did they wiſh one another *a merry Chriſtmas?* and what an omiſſion would it have been thought, to have concluded a letter without *the compliments of the ſeaſon?* The great hall reſounded with the tumultuous joys of ſervants and tenants, and the gambols they played ſerved as amuſement to the lord of the manſion and his family, who by encouraging every art conducive to mirth and entertainment, endeavoured to ſoften the rigour of the ſeaſon, and mitigate the influence of winter. What a fund of delight was the chuſing King and Queen upon Twelfth-Night? and how greatly ought we to regret the neglect of minced-pyes, which, beſides the ideas of merry-making inſeparable from them, were always conſidered as the teſt of ſciſmatics! How zealouſly were they ſwallowed by the orthodox, to the utter confuſion of all fanatical recuſants! If any country gentleman ſhould be ſo unfortunate in this age as to lie under a ſuſpicion of hereſy, where will he find ſo eaſy a method of acquitting himſelf, as by the ordeal of plumb-porridge?

To account for a revolution which has rendered this ſeaſon (ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed formerly) now ſo little different from the reſt of the year, will be no difficult taſk. The ſhare which devotion had in the ſolemnization of Chriſtmas is greatly reduced; and it is not to be expected that thoſe who have no religion at any other part of the year, ſhould ſuddenly bring their minds from a habit of diſſipation to a temper not very eaſy to be taken up with the day. As to the influence which vacation from buſineſs and feſtal mirth have had in the

celebration

celebration of the holidays, they can have no particular effect in the preſent times, when almoſt every day is ſpent like an anniverſary rejoicing, when every dinner is a feaſt, the very taſting of our wines hard drinking, and our common play gaming. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that there is nothing remaining in this town to characterize the time, but the orange and roſemary, and the bellman's verſes.

THE Romans allotted this month to the celebration of the feaſt called the Saturnalia. During theſe holidays every ſervant had the liberty of ſaying what he pleaſed to his maſter with impunity.

——————*Age libertate Decembri,*
Quando ita majores voluerunt, utere.——

I wiſh with all my heart that the ſame indulgence was allowed to ſervants in theſe times, provided that it would be a reſtraint upon their licentiouſneſs through the reſt of the year.

THE moſt fatal revolution, and what principally concerns this ſeaſon, is the too general deſertion of the country, the great ſcene of hoſpitality. Of all the follies of this age, it is the leaſt to be accounted for, how ſmall a part of ſuch as throng to London in the winter, are thoſe who either go upon the plea of buſineſs, or to amuſe themſelves with what were formerly called the pleaſures of the place. There are the theatres, muſic, and I may add many other entertainments, which are only to be had in perfection in the metropolis: but it is really a fact, that three parts in four of thoſe who croud the houſes which are already built, and who are now taking leaſes of foundations which are to be houſes as faſt as hands can make them, come to town with the ſole view of paſſing their time over a card-table.

To

To what this is owing I am at a loſs to conceive; but I have at leaſt the ſatisfaction of ſaying, that I have not contributed to the growth of this folly: nor do I find, upon a review of all my papers, that I have painted this town in ſuch glowing and irreſiſtible colours, as to have cauſed this forcible attraction. I have not ſo much as given an ironical commendation of crowds, which ſeem to be the great allurements; nor have I anywhere attempted to put the pleaſures of the town in competition with thoſe of the country. On the contrary, it has been, and will be my care to delineate the manners and faſhions of a town life ſo truly and impartially, as rather to ſatisfy than excite the curioſity of a country reader, who may be deſirous to know what is doing in the world. If at any time I ſhould allow the metropolis it's due praiſes, as being the great mart for arts, ſciences and erudition, I ought not to be accuſed of influencing thoſe perſons who pay their viſits to it upon very different conſiderations: nor can any thing I ſhall ſay, of the tendency above-mentioned, be pleaded in excuſe for coming up to town merely to play at cards.

P. S. It would be dealing ungratefully by my correſpondents, if at the cloſe of this ſecond year, I forgot to acknowledge the many obligations I owe them. It may alſo be neceſſary to add, that ſeveral letters are come to hand, which are not rejected, but poſtponed.

LONDON: Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall-Mall, (where letters to the author are taken in) and ſold by M. COOPER at the Globe in Pater-Noſter-Row. Price 2d.